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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-01	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	SJK-01	DODE-00	DS-00
	EB-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04
	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-01
	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	RP-10	SCT-03	SDEL-01	SIL-01
	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01
	USIE-00	/089W					

-----B0292D 252150Z /38

P 252145Z NOV 91
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6406
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 12544

CINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, PINS, ASEC, SOCI, VE
SUBJECT: GROWING POLITICAL DEBATE AS DEMONSTRATIONS
CONTINUE

REF: (A) CARACAS 12504; (B) CARACAS 12430;
(C) CARACAS 12390; (D) CARACAS 11069;
(E) CARACAS 11264

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1. SUMMARY: WHILE CARACAS WAS RELATIVELY QUIET ON NOVEMBER 22 (AND OVER THE WEEKEND), CITIES LIKE SAN CRISTOBAL, MARACAIBO, MARACAY, AND BARQUISIMETO EXPERIENCED MORE VIOLENCE. RESPONDING TO THE STUDENTS' DEMANDS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO INCREASE THE SUBSIDY FOR STUDENT TRANSPORTATION BY A HUNDRED PERCENT, AND BUS OWNERS WILL REDUCE STUDENT BUS FARES. THE VIOLENCE LED TO WIDESPREAD DEBATE AMONG POLITICIANS AND THE PUBLIC AS TO THE TYPE OF CRISIS THE COUNTRY IS FACING. END SUMMARY

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DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUE

2. FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, STUDENTS IN CITIES OUTSIDE CARACAS CONTINUED TO PROTEST THE DEATH OF THEIR PEERS (REF B). POLICE BRUTALITY AND THE STUDENTS' CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO PROTEST HAVE BECOME THE NEW BATTLE CRIES. THE FOLLOWING INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED:

-- IN SAN CRISTOBAL (STATE OF TACHIRA), UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BURNED FOUR VEHICLES AND THREATENED TO BURN ANOTHER SIX THAT THEY HAD HIJACKED.

-- IN MARACAIBO (STATE OF ZULIA), THREE VEHICLES WERE BURNED, AND THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY AND SOME FACULTY MEMBERS WERE HELD FOR A FEW HOURS BY STUDENTS.

-- IN MARACAY (STATE OF ARAGUA), FIVE STUDENTS WERE INJURED. PROTESTORS ATTACKED COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, MOSTLY BY THROWING STONES AGAINST WINDOWS. IN THE SAME
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STATE, IN THE SMALLER CITY OF TURMERO, DEMONSTRATORS LOOTED SEVERAL STORES.

-- AND, IN BARQUISIMETO (STATE OF LARA), POLICE FORCEFULLY KEPT DEMONSTRATORS OUT OF THE CENTER OF THE CITY. PROTESTORS BURNED TIRES AND INTERRUPTED TRAFFIC OUTSIDE THE CENTER OF TOWN.

3. IN CARACAS ON NOVEMBER 24, STUDENTS AT THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE ANNOUNCED A PROTEST MARCH FOR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, TO DEMAND THE DISMISSAL OF THE COMMANDER OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE. (THE METROPOLITAN POLICE WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHOOTING DEATHS OF THE STUDENTS.) STUDENTS ARE EXPECTING RESIDENTS FROM THE 23 DE ENERO AND MACARAO NEIGHBORHOODS (WHERE THE DEATHS OCCURRED) TO PARTICIPATE.

TRANSPORTATION AGREEMENT REACHED

4. ACCORDING TO PUBLISHED REPORTS, THE GOVERNMENT AND OFFICIALS OF THE BUS OWNERS ASSOCIATION HAVE AGREED TO ROLL BACK STUDENT FARES TO A LEVEL (2.50 BOLIVARES OR FOUR US CENTS) IN EFFECT BEFORE THE MOST RECENT ROUND OF INCREASES. THE GOVERNMENT WILL RAISE BY A HUNDRED

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PERCENT THE SUBSIDIES IT PAYS TO BUS OWNERS TO
COMPENSATE FOR THE LOWER FARE. THIS AGREEMENT IS
REPORTEDLY TO BE VALID FOR TWO MONTHS ONLY.

CAP: POLICE MUST NOT USE GUNS AGAINST DEMONSTRATORS

5. PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ MET THE TOP LEADERSHIP
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OF HIS PARTY, ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD), NOVEMBER 22, AND
REPORTEDLY REAFFIRMED HIS EARLIER INSTRUCTION TO POLICE
NOT TO USE FIREARMS AGAINST PROTESTING STUDENTS. CAP,
ACCORDING TO PARTY OFFICIALS, WAS ANGRY THAT HIS
INSTRUCTIONS HAD NOT BEEN OBEYED. (AS REPORTED IN REF
A, SOME POLICE OFFICERS ALLEGEDLY REMOVED THE PLASTIC
ANTI-RIOT BULLETS FROM THEIR AMMUNITION CARTRIDGES AND
REPLACED THEM WITH MARBLES.) AD LEADERS SAID THEY
DISCUSSED WITH CAP THE CAUSES OF THE PRESENT SOCIAL
UNREST AND CONCLUDED THAT A STATE OF EMERGENCY IS NOT
REQUIRED. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR ALEJANDRO IZAGUIRRE
ALSO PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING, AND HE WAS REPORTEDLY
CRITICIZED BY PARTY LEADERS FOR NOT EXERCISING
SUFFICIENT CONTROL OVER THE POLICE FORCE.

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6. SOME PARTY LEADERS, HOWEVER, HAVE SAID THAT THE
SOCIAL CRISIS IS MORE THAN JUST STUDENTS PROTESTING BUS
FARES. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARLOS CANACHE MATA NOTED
THAT POLICE BRUTALITY IS ON THE RISE, AND THAT THE
POPULATION IS VERY MUCH AGAINST THE GASOLINE PRICE
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INCREASE AND "EXAGGERATED" BUS FARE INCREASES. BECAUSE
OF THIS PERCEPTION OF UNJUSTIFIED PRICE INCREASES, PARTY
LEADERS REQUESTED CAP TO CONSIDER MEASURES AGAINST
"SPECULATORS" WHO INCREASE PRICES OF BASIC COMMODITIES
OUT OF LINE WITH THEIR TRUE COSTS. (THIS LINE ON
"SPECULATION" IS SIMILAR TO ONE THAT CANACHE TOOK IN A
MEETING WITH EMBASSY LAST WEEK.)

MOD: PUBLIC ORDER WILL BE MAINTAINED

7. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GENERAL FERNANDO OCHOA
ANTICH, SAID IN A PRESS INTERVIEW THAT IF PUBLIC ORDER
IS THREATENED, THE ARMED FORCES WILL RESPOND TO ORDERS TO
RESTORE IT. OCHOA REJECTED FIRMLY ANY POSSIBILITY OF A
COUP BY THE MILITARY SINCE "THIS SITUATION (MILITARY
RULE) HAS FAILED IN VENEZUELA AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES."
COMMENTING ON THE PRESENT SITUATION, HE SAID IT HAD NOT
REACHED A CRITICAL STAGE, AND THAT DECLARATION OF A
STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS NOT NECESSARY.

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TRADE ASSOCIATION: COUNTRY FACES CRITICAL SITUATION

8. THE PRESIDENT OF CONSECOMERCIO, WHICH REPRESENTS COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS, MET WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ ON NOVEMBER 22 REGARDING WHAT HE CALLED, "THE DANGEROUS MOMENT THAT WE ARE PRESENTLY EXPERIENCING IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ARENAS." THE HEAD OF THIS BUSINESS ORGANIZATION TOLD CAP THAT THE COUNTRY'S LEADERS MUST BECOME MORE AGGRESSIVE IN CHANNELING THE POPULATION'S PROTESTS, SO AS TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS OF THE COUNTRY. ACCORDING TO
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CONSECOMERCIO, THE PROTESTS ARE NOT DIRECTED AGAINST CAP'S PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT, WHICH MUST CONTINUE, BUT RATHER REFLECT THE CONCERNS THAT ORDINARY CITIZENS ARE NOT ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED IN THE POLITICAL ARENA. CONSECOMERCIO CALLED UPON CAP TO PROMOTE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM.
FELDER

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